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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2300

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3117

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1410

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3458

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2844

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP

RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000600

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/10/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR KG

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ FOREIGN MINISTER'S TOUR D'HORIZON OVER
LUNCH AT AMBASSADOR'S

REF: A. BISHKEK 598

1B. BISHKEK 543

1C. BISHKEK 521

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: The Ambassador hosted Foreign Minister Sarbayev for lunch on June 9. They discussed election-related issues, Kyrgyzstan's international relations, and problems with Uzbekistan. Sarbayev said that President Bakiyev had agreed to an increase in the number of OSCE observers who would be invited to monitor the July 23 Presidential Election. He sought the Ambassador's advice on strengthening relations with Saudi Arabia and the Arab world. Sarbayev also complained about relations with Uzbekistan and claimed he had advised Bakiyev to confront Uzbek President Karimov directly. End Summary.

More Election Monitors

12. (C) The Ambassador hosted Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbayev for a one-on-one lunch on June 9. Sarbayev told the Ambassador that President Bakiyev would be meeting with OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Joao Soares later that day, and Bakiyev would inform Soares that Kyrgyzstan would allow "as many observers as the OSCE wants" for the July 23 Presidential election. (Note: As reported in Refs B and C, Kyrgyzstan had issued an invitation to the OSCE which limited the number of observers from OSCE/ODIHR and from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Per June 10 press reports, Bakiyev proposed to double the number of OSCE observers, which should satisfy OSCE/ODIHR's interest in conducting a standard, statistically valid Election Observation Mission. End Note.)

13. (C) Sarbayev claimed that the OSCE was quick to criticize Kyrgyzstan, but never offered words of praise for things done right. Sarbayev said he hoped the increase in election observers would "get the OSCE off our backs" and make the relationship with the OSCE less adversarial. He asked for

U.S. support in this regard.

Opening to the Arab World

¶4. (C) Sarbayev said he was concerned that Kyrgyzstan was becoming isolated internationally, "wedged" between China and Russia. He said that he was trying to keep a line open to the West, but he also wanted to strengthen ties to the Arab world in order to balance China and Russia. Sarbayev said that, in particular, he wanted to strengthen ties to Saudi Arabia, and he asked the Ambassador for her advice because of her recent service as Consul General in Jeddah and in other parts of the Arab world. "You know the Saudis," he said.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador asked why Sarbayev wanted to strengthen ties with Saudi Arabia, when Kyrgyz government officials and others had previously indicated that Saudi interests were funding extremist elements in the country and the Saudis took such a strict approach on religious issues. Sarbayev blurted out: "Because they are the richest and we need financial help." Giving Sarbayev a primer on the Arab world in general and the Gulf states in particular, the Ambassador suggested that Sarbayev might want to consider strengthening ties to other Arab states in addition to Saudi Arabia, particularly those more in sync with Kyrgyzstan's secular approach to governance.

More Complaining about Uzbekistan

¶6. (C) Once again, Sarbayev turned to complaints about Uzbekistan and disagreements over water issues. Commenting

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on the MFA-organized visit on June 5 to the Toktogul Reservoir and the Kambarata 2 hydroelectric construction project (Ref A), Sarbayev moaned that Uzbek Ambassador Pulatkhodzhaev had run around during the tour telling everyone that Kambarata 2 was a bad idea. Sarbayev claimed that he had advised Bakiyev to confront Uzbek President Karimov directly over the disagreements concerning water, dams, and electricity.

Gossip from Fellow FMs

¶7. (C) Sarbayev relayed gossip about the Russian leadership gleaned from his recent meetings with fellow regional foreign ministers (the recent SCO Foreign Ministers meeting in Moscow, and the EU Troika-Central Asia meeting in Dushanbe). Sarbayev said that according to his colleagues, there is "terrible tension" between Russian President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin. "It's gotten so bad that their wives don't even talk to each other any more." Medvedev had been cautioned against confronting Putin, but Medvedev was "stubborn" and "legalistic." "He thinks that because he is legally the President, he really does have certain rights and intends to stand on them."

¶8. (C) Sarbayev said he and others were concerned that the situation could become "incendiary," as the two divide power and businesses and "could even lead to another Russian civil war." The Ambassador pointed out that as the two appear to have largely the same program and the same ideological approach, it was unlikely that any conflict between the two would lead to a wider conflict in society. Sarbayev nodded: "Actually, you're right. There will probably be a Palace coup instead of war. But we're nervous. War would be a disaster for the entire world." Sarbayev concluded that "everyone in the Russian government" loves Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov because "he's tough," and morale "had never been higher" in the Russian MFA.

Comment

¶ 9. (C) We see Bakiyev's decision to allow more election observers from OSCE as a step forward that should strengthen the credibility of OSCE/ODIHR's Election Observation Mission. The core OSCE/ODIHR team arrived in Bishkek June 9.
GFOELLER